

A Work of Art

Mass College of Art and Design's new partnership with the state

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During the 2002-03 fiscal crisis in Massachusetts, Gov. Mitt Romney proposed sweeping changes for public colleges in the state. Among them was a proposal to privatize three highly specialized colleges, including Massachusetts College of Art and Design, the nation's only independent public college of art and design. The rationale was that the college could not only survive, but also "soar" with an independent status. But when trustees and administrators examined Romney's proposal closely, they found that the governor's plan was not economically feasible for a small, specialized college with a tiny endowment (about \$2 million at that time) and a large campus with \$15 million in deferred maintenance.

Given the current and future importance of creative industries to the region's economy, the trustees remained committed to MassArt's mission to provide access to a strong professional education in the visual arts for all students of talent, regardless of economic or ethnic backgrounds. For that to happen, the trustees believed that the college must retain its public status, and that the governor and the Legislature must maintain a financial investment sufficient to keep the college truly affordable. At the same time, it was determined that the state appropriation was insufficient for studio-based education, and moving the college to a private status would lead to higher student tuition and fees, thus overturning the historic 135-year-old mission of the college to educate talented residents of Massachusetts in fine arts, design, and art education. This compromise the college community was unwilling to make.

As an alternative, we proposed a governance and financial model for MassArt based upon the experiences learned from public hybrid models throughout the nation, including

Cornell University's statutory colleges and especially Maryland's St. Mary's College, which a few years earlier had been recognized by the Maryland Legislature as an exceptional public liberal arts college and given extraordinary authority and responsibility for its own future. MassArt proposed that it remain public, but, in exchange for a reduced initial state appropriation, the trustees would be given increased authority and responsibility for their future: to set and retain tuition and fees; to set enrollment goals and admissions standards; and to develop, with the Board of Higher Education (BHE) a set of performance goals specific to its mission as the nation's only public college of art and design and to report annually on progress. MassArt administrators knew the college was competitive nationally and — by attracting students beyond state lines and outside New England, even when charging tuition for these students at market rates for independent peer colleges of art and design — it could expand its financial support enough to increase the size of the undergraduate student body, including Massachusetts residents; increase the quality of the education by enabling MassArt to hire additional faculty of the highest quality; and develop additional resources to improve studio equipment and facilities.

During the FY 2004 budget session, the Legislature authorized MassArt and two other specialized colleges (Massachusetts Maritime Academy and UMass Medical School) to propose new models to leverage their strengths. Initially, tuition retention would be granted to MassArt trustees as a five-year pilot; the college would maintain an undergraduate student body with at least 60% Massachusetts residents, down from the current 70%. The college also would retain its strong

commitment to a diverse student body and ensure that tuition for in-state students "remain affordable to all Massachusetts residents."

What Happened?

The initial five-year period 2003-2008 of the New Partnership between MassArt and the state reveals a record of success. The studio model of education is both equipment- and faculty-intensive, but additional revenue from out-of-state students has helped provide growing funding for the college. Today, MassArt receives approximately 32% of its operating budget from the Commonwealth, the smallest percentage of any state or community college in Massachusetts. This appropriation essentially allows the college to maintain modest in-state tuition and fees, less than one-third the average of its independent art-college peers, such as Rhode Island School of Design, Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, and School of the Museum of Fine Arts-Boston. New England students, including those covered by NEBHE's "tuition break" program, pay approximately 175% of the in-state rate, far less than the full out-of-state rate. Out-of-state and international student tuition is competitive with our peer institutions, this year set at \$23,000.

Over the first five years of the agreement, total student charges for Massachusetts residents increased less than the amounts anticipated in the New Partnership business model approved in 2004 by the BHE. For the last three years, annual increases have been held at 5% or less. Need-based financial aid also increased for Massachusetts residents. The current plan means that no student should need loans to meet the direct cost of tuition and fees, currently \$7,900. The college is working to increase campus-based financial aid so it can extend this commitment to include a

portion of the indirect costs of attendance, such as materials and supplies.

Because of the availability of additional funds to support enrollment growth and the growing national recognition of MassArt as a leading college of art and design, total enrollment in the bachelor of fine art program increased 18% during the five-year period, from 1,352 students in fall 2002 to 1,592 in fall 2007. Enrollment of Massachusetts residents — something the Legislature originally worried might decrease — increased 22%, while total out-of-state student enrollment grew 27%. Currently, Massachusetts residents make up 71% of BFA enrollments, well above the legislatively stipulated 60% benchmark. Tuition and fee revenue generated from out-of-state students grew 58% between FY 2004 and 2007, through enrollment growth and increases in student charges. The number of full-time faculty teaching in the undergraduate program increased by 19% as a result of making a commitment to strengthening the quality of the learning experience the highest priority of the plan. The college experienced strong growth in the design areas of its curriculum, especially in industrial and fashion design. During this period, the college also launched a BFA program in animation and a master's program in architecture. In addition, the college has been able to provide substantial scholarship support to students participating in a growing number of international travel courses.

Collaborations

One of the unanticipated outcomes of the New Partnership agreement has been MassArt's deepened involvement in the Colleges of the Fenway (COF), a consortium of six small colleges in Boston. Although MassArt is the only public college among the six — other partners include Simmons, Emmanuel and Wheelock colleges, the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences and Wentworth Institute — we have been able to participate fully with these colleges in cross-registration and expanded shared student development programs such as intramural sports,

performing arts, a Global Education Center and a COF orchestra and chorus. In addition, we share dining facilities and a bookstore with Mass College of Pharmacy, and a student fitness center with Wentworth and MassPharmacy. Our faculty and professional staff participate in joint development programs with their colleagues at the other COF colleges, and we have been able to take significant cost-saving measures through pooled resources. Most notable is a six-college wide-area IT network with high-level service and enormous savings for each college. Plans for even greater cooperative ventures are underway in areas such as health services and expanded residence housing. Indeed, the independence given to our trustees through the New Partnership has increased the willingness of our sister COF colleges to enter into partnership agreements with MassArt.

A final positive outcome of the plan has been a significant increase in private support. An active foundation board has led a renewed and successful effort in fundraising. The value of our endowment, though still much smaller than we would like, has increased since the inception of the New Partnership from \$2.8 million to \$8.5 million in FY07. Total private fundraising doubled after the New Partnership was implemented, from just under \$2 million in FY03 to more than \$4 million in FY07. Our donors tell us they have increased confidence in the college knowing that the state officially recognizes MassArt as a special-purpose college and that our trustees now have enhanced authority to make key multiyear planning and budgeting decisions. We are currently in the silent phase of a comprehensive campaign with goals that include increasing student financial aid, faculty support, a Center for Art and Community Partnerships, a Center for Contemporary Art, and a major renovation and expansion of our highly regarded public galleries and exhibitions program.

Performance Measures

As a specialized college, MassArt does not participate in the standardized

performance measurement system that the BHE has established for public colleges in Massachusetts. But the college annually submits to the BHE and to legislative leadership performance reports on a number of key indicators, including affordability, access for Massachusetts residents, expanding private support, quality of students, first-year retention and graduation rates, and employment of graduates. The reports are widely distributed within the college. Each year we identify indicators to prioritize and additional ones to track.

Overall, the academic profile of our freshman students, including GPA, SAT scores, and class rank, has increased over the period. Our freshman retention rate hovers between 85% to 90%, and our six-year graduation rate has jumped to over 65%, a high mark among state colleges in New England and among our independent art college peers. We report each year on the racial and ethnic diversity of our student body; students of color account for about 20% of our undergraduate population. International students make up an additional 4% of our undergraduate student body. We are engaged in a planning effort at the college to ensure that the diversity of our faculty and staff reflects our student population and that our curriculum, student activities and cultural programming contribute to a truly multicultural campus environment.

What's Ahead?

The New Partnership agreement has strengthened MassArt by giving it an important measure of procedural autonomy, similar to that of an independent college. At the same time, it remains true to its long-time mission as a public college and remains within the state college system of Massachusetts. The Legislature has affirmed tuition retention to be a permanent feature of the college.

The five-year implementation plan approved by the BHE in 2004 will expire this year, and we are in the process of developing a plan for the five years ahead. This will include academic plans, performance and financial aid goals, and, most critical, enrollment targets and tuition projections. At the end of our

current plan, the college is about 15 full-time equivalent (FTE) students short of the total enrollment goal of 1,555 FTE projected in its original plan, and it has not yet met the projected and desired mix of out-of-state, New England and in-state students. Our model calls for an increase in out-of-state enrollment from the current 11% of new freshmen to at least the 15% that we had projected in the initial five-year plan. In the past two years, we have begun an active recruiting strategy for students outside New England, including international students. Our applications from out-of-state students have risen sharply, but our yield has remained modest. We currently offer almost no tuition discounts and very few scholarships to students outside Massachusetts, and we believe that, given the substantial discounts by our competitive private-college peers, our out-of-state pricing may not be appropriate. We have hired an enrollment consultant to assist us in better understanding this highly competitive area of our enrollment strategy.

The New Partnership also diversifies MassArt's streams of revenue. As a very small college in a public system, MassArt has long recognized its fragility in depending heavily on state funding. In every economic downturn or state budget crisis, funding cuts have disproportionately affected the smallest colleges in the commonwealth. The New Partnership has attempted to address this concern by ensuring that the state appropriation continues, but is better balanced with revenues from a larger overall enrollment, higher student tuition — especially for students from outside New England paying market rates — and increased private support in the form of both annual giving and endowment support.

Today, after a number of encouraging years of increased Massachusetts state appropriations to its public colleges, we find ourselves once again in a time of funding reductions to campus state appropriations. Because of the depth of the global financial crisis, it is difficult and probably faulty to predict just how deep these cuts may become over

the coming months, but we are likely to experience at best a period of flat state support for our colleges. For MassArt, that means that our willingness to assume additional responsibility for enrollment growth, increasing tuition revenues from out-of-state students, enhancing private giving and expanding entrepreneurial activities (such as entering into joint building projects with small private colleges in our area) becomes more important than ever. This will not be an easy time for any of us. But for Massachusetts College of Art and Design, the increased authority and responsibility given to its trustees by the Legislature and the BHE during the last fiscal crisis has positioned the college to continue advancing its mission in preparing students as leaders in both the cultural life and the creative economy of New England.

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Linking Institutional Objectives with Campus Planning

- Master Plans and Space Reallocation Studies
- Space Programs and Needs Analysis
- Instructional Space Utilization Studies
- Space Inventories and Benchmarking
- Strategic Planning and Organizational Studies
- Policy and Process Analysis

Partial Client List

Boston College, MA
 Bowdoin College, ME
 California State University
 Fullerton, CA
 Castleton State College, VT
 College of Saint Rose, MA
 Columbia College, IL
 CUNY College of Staten
 Island, NY
 Florida International
 University, FL
 Furman University School
 of Law, SC
 Gateway Community
 College, CT
 Holy Family Community
 College, PA

Lord Fairfax Community
 College, MD
 Massachusetts State &
 Community Colleges, MA
 Marquette College, OH
 Middlebury University, MA
 Plymouth State University,
 NH
 Regis College, Ireland
 Rhode Island School of
 Design, RI
 Roger Williams University,
 RI
 Saginaw Valley State
 University, MI
 St. John's College, MD
 SUNY Oswego, NY

Texas Tech University, TX
 University of Maine —
 Orono, ME
 University of Massachusetts
 — Boston, MA
 University of New
 Hampshire, NH
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